

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Town of Canandaigua has long embraced its agricultural heritage, and in 2014 took steps to fully realize the town's commitment to the preservation and protection of agriculture through the creation of the Town of Canandaigua's first Agricultural Enhancement Plan. This Plan completes the Town's highest priority action step of the 2011 Comprehensive Plan Update.

Input from farmers, landowners and community members included:

- Mail and online survey of farmers/ landowners
- Public informational meetings and educational forum
- In-person stakeholder and farmer interviews.

Recognizing the importance of agriculture in the community, the Town applied for and received a grant from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to prepare an Agricultural Protection Plan. This Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan identifies priority farmland for long-term protection, analyzes economic and other challenges to farming, and presents strategies for the Town to encourage and facilitate the long term viability of farming operations.

**KEY FINDINGS**

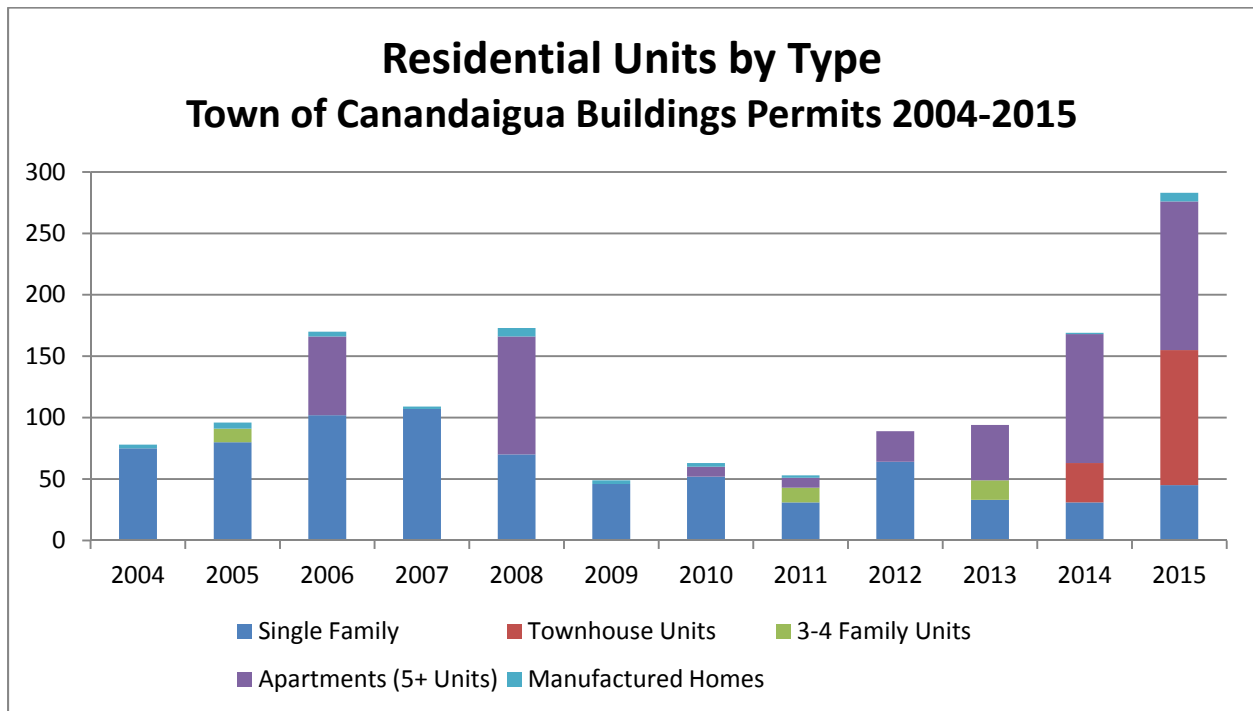
A variety of data and information was evaluated regarding the agricultural land base, agricultural industry and land use patterns in the Town. Some of the key findings that provide a basis for the plan recommendations include:

- High quality soils suitable for farming are found in 75% of the Town's land area;
- 14,670 acres - 41% of the total land area - is being actively farmed;
- Farm operations in the Town are diverse. They include very large commercial farms as well as small part time farms. Farm types include dairy, cash crops, grapes, vegetables, equine, livestock and nursery.
- 4,065 acres – 28% of the total – is leased or rented to farmers. Larger farms especially rely heavily on rented land;
- Agriculture is a major regional industry. In 2012, farms in Ontario County generated \$180 million in sales.
- Markets for farm products are global as well as local.
- Agriculture-related businesses include distribution, transportation, processing and services to farmers. Canandaigua businesses that are part of the food and agriculture regional economic cluster include Pactiv (packaging) and Artisan Meats.
- Farms buffer natural resources by absorbing runoff and keeping land undeveloped. However, runoff of nutrients and chemicals has the potential to impact water quality.
- Past Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs have resulted in the protection of 813 acres in the town through permanent conservation easements.

- Numerous agencies and organizations have the resources and expertise to partner with the Town to support agriculture and protect farmland. These include:
  - Ontario County Economic Development and Industrial Development Agency (economic development)
  - Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ontario County (technical assistance to farmers; feasibility analyses)
  - Finger Lakes Land Trust (conservation easements, landowner education)
  - Ontario County Soil & Water Conservation District (funding and technical assistance to promote best management practices on farms and all land within the County)
  - Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council and Watershed Manager (public education and technical assistance for water quality protection)

**DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES ON AGRICULTURAL LAND**

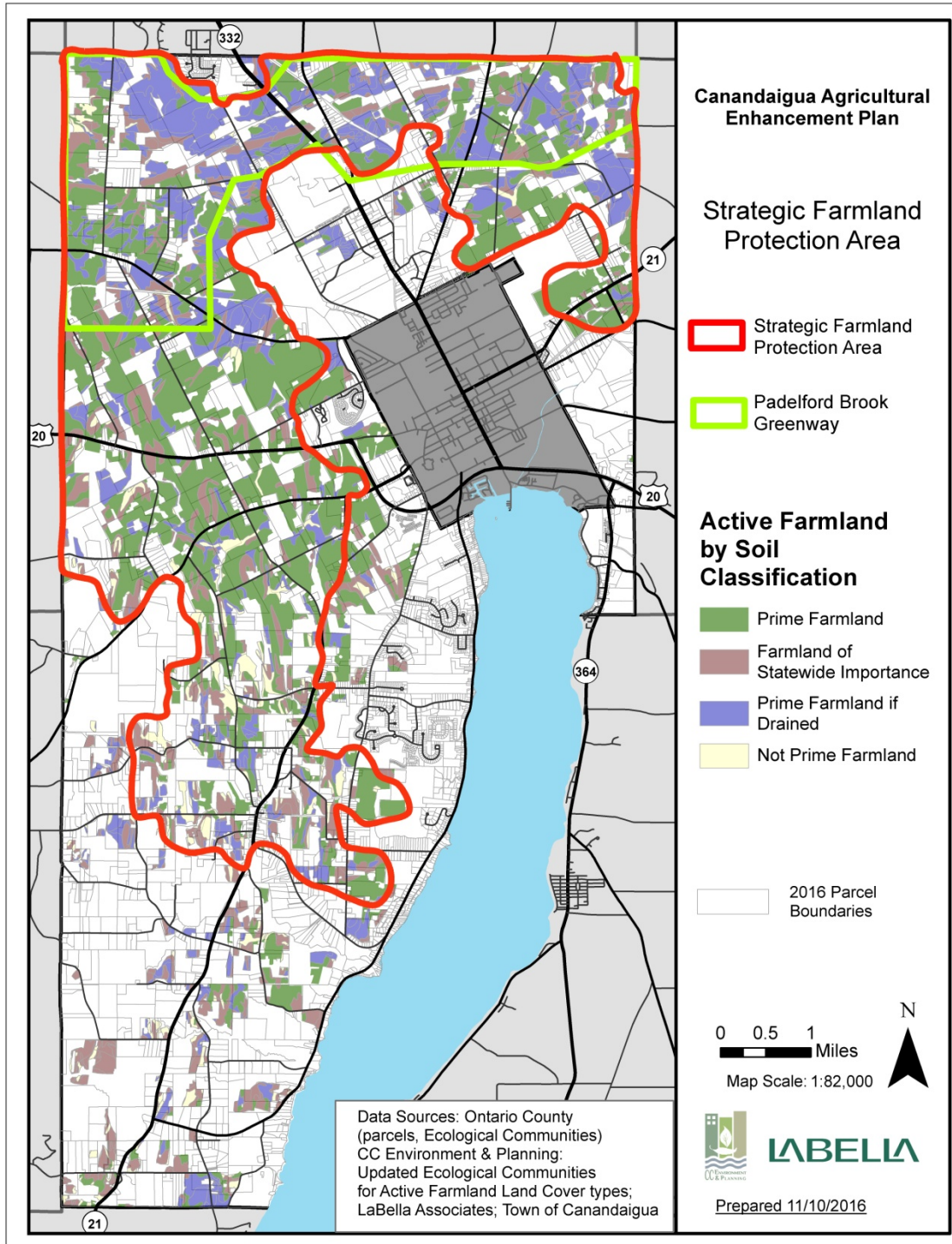
Development in the Town of Canandaigua is concentrated in areas surrounding the City of Canandaigua, along the Route 332 corridor north of the City and along the shores of Canandaigua Lake. During the past 20 years, residential subdivisions have been developed in the northern area of the Town near Farmington Town Line Road and in the area east of NYS Route 21 South. Development has increased significantly during the past several years, as shown in the following chart.



Most of the projected future development is most likely to occur in areas that are already served by public sewer. However, residential subdivisions and scattered house lots in agricultural areas have the potential to impact farm operations and/or convert farmland to other uses.

RECOMMENDED FARMLAND PROTECTION AREA

In order to focus agricultural land preservation efforts, the Town has delineated a portion of the Town as strategic farmland protection areas as depicted in the figure below. Criteria include: areas of contiguous farmland; location outside areas with sewers; and areas zoned for higher intensity uses.



## RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT AGRICULTURE AND FARMLAND PROTECTION

The plan provides the following Goals, Strategies and Actions:

**GOAL A: Improve the economic viability of farms in the Town of Canandaigua.**

**Strategy 1: Recruit agricultural processing, distribution and supply-chain businesses to appropriately-zoned land in the town.**

- a) Evaluate the feasibility of and recruit processing and/or distribution facilities to suitable industrially-zoned land within the Town of Canandaigua.
  - Partner with Ontario County and New York State economic development agencies to attract regionally significant industries.
  - Leverage rail access and infrastructure to attract bio-diesel refining or other large-scale processing plant.
- b) Support agriculture-related industrial development by extending utilities and maintaining suitable zoning.

**Strategy 2: Expand markets for and increase sales of local farm products.**

- a) Support additional purchases of local farm products by schools and institutions.
- b) Maintain a registry of locally-produced farm products and encourage local purchases by businesses, residents and developers in the Town (e.g., straw for erosion control.)

**Strategy 3: Support economic opportunities, including on-farm value-added processing.**

- a) Extend infrastructure (water, high-speed internet) to farm operations to support expansions or value-added processing.
- b) Maintain zoning regulations that allow home-based businesses.

**Strategy 4: Promote agri-tourism.**

- a) Prepare and distribute a “local farm products” guide for the Town, including farm stands, direct sales and farmers markets. Make this information available on the Town’s website.
- b) Organize farm tours, festivals or other community events that attract customers to farms with direct-to-consumer sales.

**GOAL B: Retain high quality farmland for agricultural production.**

**Strategy 1: Increase the amount of high quality agricultural land protected by permanent conservation easements.**

- a) Continue to solicit, rank and submit grant applications to the NYS Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (Purchase of Development Rights) Program.
- b) Encourage local land trusts to work with landowners interested in donating conservation easements, potentially as part of succession or estate planning.

- c) Encourage permanent protection of farmland as part of conservation subdivisions.
- d) Through “Transfer of Development Rights” and/or Incentive Zoning, facilitate private conservation easements on high quality farmland in exchange for higher density or other incentives in growth areas in the Town.
- e) Contribute Town funds toward the purchase of conservation easements, such as through the Open Space Reserve Fund and/or a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bank.

**Strategy 2: Encourage owners of leased or rented farmland to continue to make their land available for agricultural production.**

- a) Provide owners of leased or rented farmland with information about property tax incentives available to them.
  - Encourage landowners to consider giving farmers right of first refusal if they seek to sell the land.
  - Provide information about conservation easements to keep land open and available for agricultural use

**Goal C: Manage land use and development to avoid or reduce impacts on farmland.**

**Strategy 1: Maintain zoning regulations and district boundaries that encourage more intensive development outside of priority agricultural areas.**

- a) Institute a Transfer of Development Rights program to preserve agricultural land in designated conservation areas and encourage more intensive development in areas with infrastructure and access to services.
- b) Maintain zoning regulations and district boundaries that retain lower densities in agricultural areas and limit incompatible land uses such as solar farms.

**Strategy 2: Manage infrastructure to reduce impacts on farmland and agriculture.**

- a) Avoid extending public sewers into areas with high quality farmland. Consider potential impacts on agricultural operations when finalizing the Town’s Sewer Master Plan.
- b) Continue to adopt lateral restrictions to water and sewer lines for new non-agricultural development within Agricultural Districts.
- c) When carrying out road maintenance, maintain communications with farmers and farmland owners and modify project design or timing as needed when road improvement and drainage projects abut productive farmland or may impact farm operations

**Strategy 3: Revise and maintain local laws and land use regulations that support agricultural operations.**

- a) Clarify provisions in zoning regulations that exempt farm operations within certified Agricultural Districts from certain zoning provisions that regulate farm practices (see Zoning Audit).
- b) Retain Home Business provisions to accommodate complementary business uses on farms.
- c) Revise subdivision and site plan review regulations to specifically require considering impacts of proposed development neighboring farm operations.
- d) Continue to administer the Town’s Right to Farm law that requires notices on site plans and subdivision

plats that, "This property may be near a farm, as defined in the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law, § 301, Subsection 11. Sound farming practices may generate dust, odor, smoke, noise, and vibration."

- e) Consider impacts on agriculture as well as natural resources in the review of local laws and zoning revisions.

**Goal D: Reduce the impact of agricultural runoff on water quality.**

**Strategy Increase the number of farms that use best management practices to minimize runoff of sediment, manure and chemicals into streams and Canandaigua Lake.**

- a) Allocate Town funds to cost sharing programs to assist farmers and owners of farmland within the Canandaigua Lake Watershed to install best management practices.
- b) Provide information to landowners about programs that offer technical assistance and cost sharing for best management practices (e.g., SWCD’s AEM program, USDA’s conservation programs.) Conduct one-on-one outreach to farmers and landowners within the Canandaigua Lake Watershed.
- c) Support efforts by the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Inspector to enforce Watershed Rules & Regulations relating to animal waste.
- d) Adopt a policy to require natural resource conservation and best management practices when conservation easements are acquired to farmland (through conservation subdivisions, PDR, TDR or other means.)
- e) Encourage landowners who rent land to farmers to require best management practices to be installed as condition of leases.

**Goal E: Increase public awareness and appreciation of local farms and their contributions to the regional economy.**

**Strategy: Celebrate local agriculture.**

- a) Organize farm tours, festivals or other community events that celebrate the Town’s agricultural heritage.
- b) Maintain information at the Town Hall about farming practices, the NYS Agricultural District Law and the local farm economy.
- c) Place signs along roads at Town gateways that acknowledge the Town’s agricultural heritage and character.
- d) Create a Town Agricultural Advisory Committee to coordinate public education and implementation of this plan.